

# Go 'Wiki' on Linux

Explore the power of a wiki with VQWiki—a free and easy-to-install wiki tool.

**T**he idea of a 'wiki' as a collaborating tool has been around for almost 15 years, but with the advent of Wikipedia.org, the power of a wiki as a tool for creating private-public knowledge bases really caught the attention of the whole world.

The first wiki was created by Ward Cunningham in 1995, in order to make the exchange of

ideas between programmers easy. It was written using Perl and was developed using a HyperCard stack that Cunningham wrote in the late 1980s. He named it WikiWikiWeb.

You may be a novice in HTML, yet you can add, edit, remove and view Web page content easily. Such ease of operation makes a wiki an effective tool for collaboration. Wikis support version tracking, searching, and hyperlinks, and have simple text syntax for creating new pages and cross links between internal pages, on the fly.

Setting up your own wiki is not a tough job. And this article attempts to make it even simpler by using VQWiki—a free tool that can be downloaded from <http://www.vqwiki.org>.

## VQWiki

VQWiki is a lightweight wiki tool, based on JSP. It is highly extendible in the form of plug-ins and is very easy to install and use. It is released under the GNU GPL. More information on VQWiki plug-ins can be found at <http://www.vqwiki.org/plugins/>

Installing and configuring VQWiki is pretty straightforward. All you need is a Linux machine running the latest version of Apache Tomcat and a Web browser. In fact, VQWiki can run on any Servlet container that supports Java Servlet 2.3 and JSP 1.2 specifications. For the sake of simplicity, I will show you how to set up VQWiki on Apache Tomcat.

## Installing VQWiki

Let us run through the installation process for VQWiki on Linux.



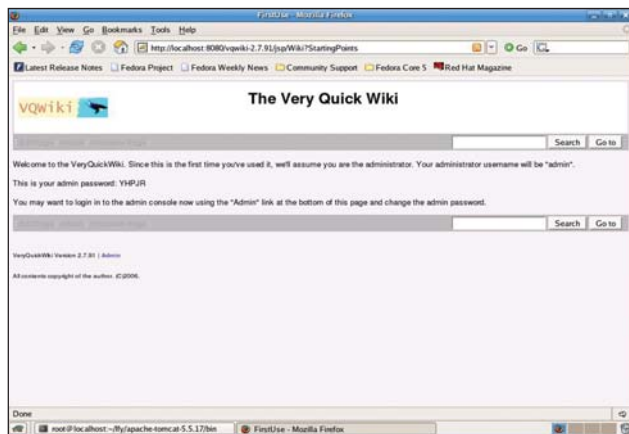


Figure 1: VQWiki first use screen

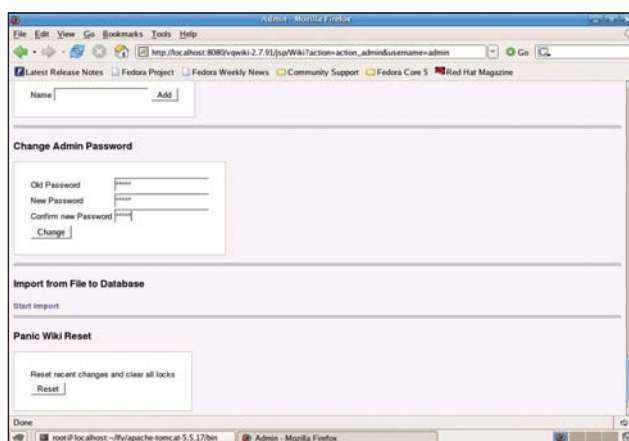


Figure 2: Admin password setting

**Step 1:** Download the latest version of VQWiki from <http://www.vqwiki.org/downloads.php>.

While writing this article, the latest stable version found was 2.7.91.

**Step 2:** Stop Tomcat and copy the downloaded *vqwiki-2.7.91.war* file to your Tomcat webapps directory (*\${TOMCAT\_HOME}/webapps*)

**Step 3:** Start Tomcat and point your Web browser to <http://localhost:8080/vqwiki-2.7.91>

You should see a screen similar to the one shown in Figure 1.

Note down the administrator *username* and *password*. You need this to log in as 'admin' user to configure VQWiki.

## Configuring VQWiki

Very few configurations are required to start using VQWiki.

First and foremost, you need to change the 'admin' user password. To change the password, click on the 'admin' link at the bottom of the screen and log in as the 'admin' user. Scroll down to the bottom of the screen and change the 'admin' user password and click on the 'Change' button as shown in Figure 2.

Changing the password successfully would show the message 'Password changed' on the top left side of

the screen.

By default, VQWiki works with flat-file persistence. It can also be configured to work with the MySQL database. Please refer the VQWiki administrator/user guide for more information. You can find the online version of VQWiki documents at:

<http://www.vqwiki.org/documentation.php>

For flat-file persistence, look for the '*File-system directory*' in the persistence settings screen as shown in Figure 3.

This is the location where VQWiki will store all your wiki page contents.

When you log out of the 'admin' user, you will see the VQWiki main screen as shown in Figure 4.

## Using VQWiki

Using VQWiki is a cakewalk. To edit the main page, click on the 'EditPage' tab and replace the page content according to your need. You can find help on page formatting at the bottom part of the edit screen.

To edit the top area, bottom area or left menu, type 'AdminOnlyTopics' in the search box and click the Search button. Click on the 'AdminOnlyTopics' link in the search result screen.

To edit the Left menu, log in as the 'admin' user and click on the 'LeftMenu' link. Click the 'EditPage' and modify the content accordingly. Finally, click the 'Save' button to save the left menu content.

To add a new topic, click 'EditPage' and type the topic title enclosed in back ticks. For example, if the title of your topic is 'My First Topic', then edit the page with the line as shown below:

```
'My First Topic'
```

Click the 'Save' button and click on the newly created topic link to add content for your topic. A sample 'My First Topic' is shown in Figure 5.

To delete a topic, replace the page content with a single line 'delete'. To permanently delete the topic, log in as the 'admin' user and run 'Purge deleted topics'.

## WHAT IS A 'WIKI' – THE WIKIPEDIA DEFINITION

A wiki is a type of website that allows the visitors themselves to easily add, remove and otherwise edit and change some available content, sometimes without the need for registration. This ease of interaction and operation makes a wiki an effective tool for collaborative authoring. The term wiki can also refer to the collaborative software itself (wiki engine) that facilitates the operation of such a website, or to certain specific wiki sites, including the computer science site (an original wiki), WikiWikiWeb, and online encyclopaedia such as Wikipedia.

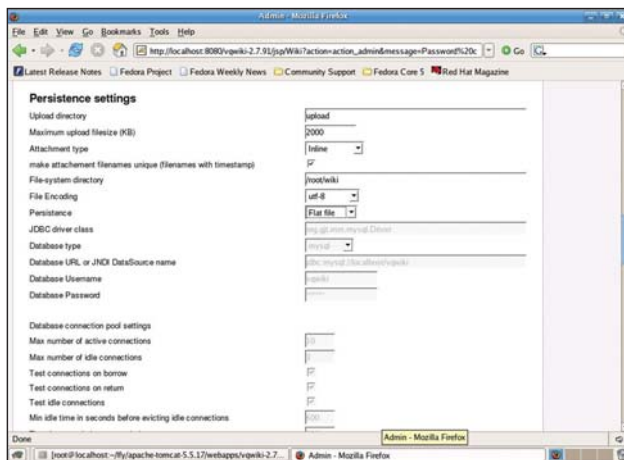


Figure 3: VQWiki persistence settings

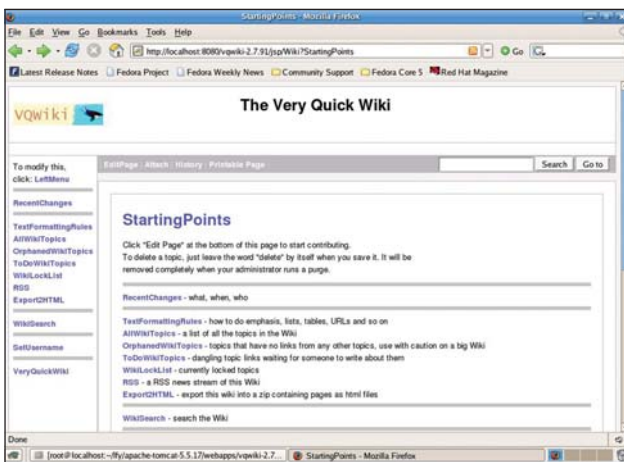


Figure 4: VQWiki main screen

## Read-only pages

VQWiki allows administrators to mark pages as *read-only*. This will prevent users from modifying the page content. To mark a page as *read-only*, log in as the admin user and add the topic to 'Read-only Topics' list. For a more controlled mechanism, see LDAP integration.

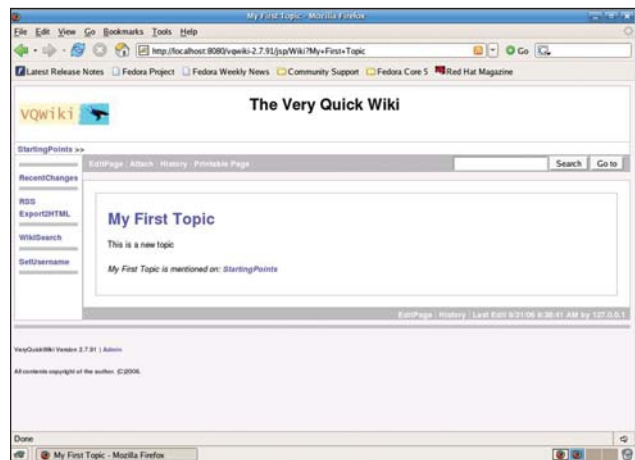


Figure 5: Creating a new topic

## LDAP integration

Normally, VQWiki allows anybody to view and edit the page contents. If for some reason, you want to control this, then you have to integrate VQWiki with LDAP. More on LDAP integration can be found at [http://www.vqwiki.org/docs/vqwiki\\_book.html#ldap\\_config](http://www.vqwiki.org/docs/vqwiki_book.html#ldap_config)

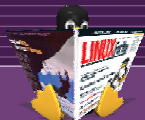
VQWiki is more than just a learning tool. It is an empowering tool that gives you the freedom to express your ideas in the best environment. And undoubtedly, with the easy installation procedure, the entire application becomes child's play. Give it a try! **END**

## REFERENCES

- Wiki: <http://wiki.org/wiki.cgi?WhatsWiki>
- Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki>
- VQWiki: [http://www.vqwiki.org/docs/vqwiki\\_book.html](http://www.vqwiki.org/docs/vqwiki_book.html)

**By: Raja R.K.** The author is working as project lead at HCL Technologies, Chennai.

Some of you will  
spend **THOUSANDS**  
to learn **OLD**  
technologies



Read **LINUX For You**

ASIA'S FIRST  
LINUX MAGAZINE



The smarter  
ones will grab every  
opportunity to  
master the future

For more info, log on to:  
[www.linuxforu.com](http://www.linuxforu.com)

**LINUX For You**  
THE COMPLETE MAGAZINE ON OPEN SOURCE